



The Archaeology of Smardale A Walk with Tom Clare

Tom Clare was the county archaeologist for Cumbria for many years and is well known for his guide book to the archaeology of the county. On Saturday 20th June he shared his interest in landscape with the group on a walk to Smardale.

The first feature we were introduced to was the old deer park wall which crosses the landscape and is thought to have been 12 foot high when complete. This encloses an area which contains a number of settlement sites which appear to have been farmsteads of either prehistoric, Romano-British or medieval date. The uncertainty is due to there having been no useful archaeological investigation in the area. Associated with these sites are a number of dykes which cross the landscape and appear to have divided it up into cultivated and uncultivated land.

A deep hollow way marks the course of the old main road between Kirkby Stephen and Kendal. As it crosses the beck years of traffic have eroded away any soil to expose the well worn bedrock beneath. Close to where the road crosses a tributary of the river Eden a number of curious mounds can be seen, known locally as the Giant's graves. It has been suggested that these long low mounds could have been rabbit warrens used by the monks of Ravenstonedale for fresh meat but the interpretation remains uncertain.

A highlight of the walk was a visit to the site of Severals, a large Romano-British settlement and enclosures. Tom took us through the site pointing out paddocks, houses

and fields which are made clear by air photographs. Tom made an interesting point about a rectangular house within the larger settlement which may belong to a later period. He compared the site to that of Ribblehead when an Anglian settlement has been excavated that appears to have re-used an earlier Romano-British one. He suggested that the same pattern may have been repeated at Severals. At one point the field walls here converge on an earlier Bronze Age cairn which was incorporated into the settlement. This provided a clear example of the way in which successive generations at Smardale have reused the structures of earlier periods and incorporated them into their own cultural landscapes. This has continued from prehistory through the Roman and Medieval periods into the present. Smardale provides a rich tapestry of archaeological remains, which all present agreed was well worth another visit.

GLENCOYNE

A possible Iron Age hut circle at Glenridding

This summer a project to investigate an Iron Age farmstead at Glencoyne was completed by Dr Helen Loney and Andrew Hoan of Glasgow university.

The Iron Age in Cumbria is poorly understood and the aim of the project was to excavate and date a hut circle within a possible Iron Age farmstead overlooking lake Ullswater. A primary goal of the

excavation was to locate the hearth and obtain charcoal for Radio-carbon dating.

The excavation revealed the walls of a circular hut 15m in diameter. The entrance faced east towards the lake but was badly damaged. Within the hut several large flat slabs had been lain leading from the entrance to a central hearth pit also stone-lined. To the west of the hearth a large flat boulder had one face which had been rubbed smooth, presumably by the action of grinding wheat.

As the excavation progressed it became clear that the entrance had been demolished deliberately after the main occupation period of the dwelling. Discoveries of Roman Samian pottery within the tumble of the hut circle walls suggested that the site had been used as a dump in a later period. This was confirmed with the discovery of a piece of a Roman glass bangle within the damaged entrance.

Until the Radio-carbon dates are revealed it is not certain whether this is a pre-Roman or Romano-British site. However it does seem clear that it was re-used in the Roman period perhaps as an agricultural building or animal shelter, probably by a wealthy native family living in the larger Romano-British farmstead down slope from this one.

As the project came to a close the discovery of post holes indicated the site also had an earlier period of use preceding the construction of the hut circle. This discovery makes it likely that the project will continue next year.

Martin Railton

AUTUMN EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE THAT INDOOR MEETINGS WILL NOW BE HELD AT THE
APPLEBY SUPPER ROOM ABOVE THE MARKET HALL AT 7.30PM

POTTERY WORKSHOP

Saturday 7th September 1.00pm
Tullie House Museum, Carlisle

This is an opportunity to get your hands on some real archaeology at the Tullie House Museum with Tim Paddley. The workshop will include a talk about pottery technology and a 'hands on' session looking at prehistoric, Roman and medieval pottery. This will be followed with a visit the museum gallery.

Booking is essential. Please return the form below, including a cheque by 1st September to secure a place. Cost £4 per person. Meet at the entrance desk just before 1.00pm.

Talks are free to members of Appleby Archaeology.
Non-members are very welcome (£1.50 Donation).

LEAD MINING AT KILHOPE John Wilson

Tuesday 8th October 7.30pm
Appleby Supper Room

This talk will introduce the industrial archaeology and social history of Kilhope Lead Mine at Weardale revealing what life was like in the Pennines for the miners and their families.

THE ROMANS IN CUMBRIA David Shotter

Tuesday 12th November 7.30pm
Appleby Supper Room

David Shotter will be discussing the evidence for the Romans in the Lune Valley and elsewhere in Cumbria. We know they were here, but where were they? How did they live? and what changes did they introduce in Cumbria?

Parliamentary Enclosure and the Landscape of the Upper Eden and Lune Valleys

With Prof. Ian Whyte
Tuesday 10th December 7.30pm

Tonight's talk will reveal how the present landscape was created and how many of our field boundaries came into existence through a series of enclosures.

UPPER EDEN HISTORY SOCIETY LANDSCAPE DAY

Saturday 23rd November

In addition to our talk on Landscape the Upper Eden History Society are holding an event looking at the Eden landscape. For further details contact UEHS direct on 017683 71916 or contact David Kay on 017683 41533.

POTTERY WORKSHOP BOOKING FORM

For Tullie House, Saturday 7th September 2002

NAME

TELEPHONE NUMBER

I would like to book places on the Pottery Workshop and Museum visit at £4 each.

I enclose a check made payable to "Appleby Archaeology Group" for £.....

Send to Martin Railton, Pear Tree Cottage, Kirkland Road, Skirwith, CA10 1RL